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SUBJECT: MEDVEDEV'S PROPOSED EUROPEAN SECURITY TREATY: HOW  
TO RESPOND

REF: A. MOSCOW 2906

1B. MOSCOW 2781

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle for reasons 1.4 (d).

Summary

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11. (C) After considerable build-up, President Medvedev unexpectedly released a draft European Security Treaty on November 29 and Russia introduced a parallel draft NATO-Russia treaty at the December 4 NATO ministerial (collectively the ESTs -- European Security Treaties). The ESTs seek to redress Russia's grievances from the last 20 years over NATO enlargement and the Balkan wars and to reestablish Moscow's role as a great power with influence on par with any other Euro-Atlantic country. In reality, the ESTs break little new ground conceptually, foundering on the tension between progressive European ideals and Russia's instincts to protect state sovereignty. The resulting text tries to subordinate existing structures and norms to the idea that one party to the treaty cannot take actions related to security that "affect significantly" the security of other parties. The purpose is to limit NATO's activities (e.g. enlargement and exercises) and render redundant the OSCE's conflict-prevention structures. Russia insists the new treaty must be "legally binding," but it contains no enforcement mechanisms or sanctions provisions.

12. (C) While this draft is clumsy and tendentious, it is another loud signal that Russia is interested in a serious dialogue on European security. While recent Russian actions, e.g. the war in Georgia, have made such a dialogue more difficult, a rejection of Medvedev's proposal would further alienate Russia from Euro-Atlantic institutions and ultimately detract from regional security. With skillful diplomacy, we can use Medvedev's proposal to try to overcome deadlocks on CFE and A/CFE as well as enhancing transparency measures. Engagement will also help preserve improved Russian cooperation on Afghanistan and Iran. In the long term, gaining Russian buy-in on incremental changes to Europe's security architecture offers a way to build on the successes of European integration and spread security and prosperity to former Soviet countries. End Summary.

Now in Black and White

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13. (C) President Medvedev announced Russia's intent to spearhead a legally binding treaty on European Security in June 2008. The impetus is the Russian perception that the West in the 1990s failed to capitalize on the end of the Cold War to build new European security structures inclusive of Russia, but instead chose to humiliate Russia by enlarging NATO and ignoring Moscow's objections to military intervention in the Balkans. On November 29, Medvedev abruptly unveiled a draft of his European Security Treaty

(EST), sending letters to President Obama and other leaders and posting it on his website. While the timing seems to have been intended to capture the agenda of the OSCE and NRC ministerials, the lack of advance notice has undercut the roll-out and Foreign Ministry contacts tell us some senior officials there are unhappy with the draft and were reluctant to release it in its current form.

¶4. (C) The treaty's stated intention is for parties (all countries "from Vancouver to Vladivostok," probably meaning current OSCE member-states) to cooperate on the basis of principles of "indivisible, equal and undiminished security" and agree to refrain from activities that affect significantly the security of other parties to the treaty. Moreover, parties that are members of military alliances pledge to ensure those alliances will not take decisions that affect significantly the security of others. This language is apparently intended to subordinate NATO and other organizations to a new code of conduct and provide redress for parties that believe their security is being compromised.

While the broader treaty spells out OSCE-like consultation mechanisms to deal with security threats, all decisions are based on consensus and there are no enforcement mechanisms or sanctions provisions.

¶5. (C) The broader draft as written would give Russia and its allies a platform for opposing (but not stopping) NATO enlargement, exercises, operations, and Partnership for Peace activities. In addition, it could make the OSCE's role in hard security redundant and could further reduce Russian cooperation with the OSCE on the human and economic dimensions. The draft is silent on the mechanics in

MOSCOW 00003056 002 OF 003

confronting new threats and challenges from outside the Euro-Atlantic space, arguably the issue creating the most pressing need for alterations in existing structures.

The treaty that should have been...

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¶6. (C) The parallel "NATO Treaty" that Lavrov delivered at the December 4 NRC ministerial echoes much of the language of the Medvedev draft, but also includes provisions designed to insulate Russia from NATO by limiting military deployments on the territory of countries that joined the alliance after 1997, making legally binding the commitments undertaken in the NATO-Russia Founding Act. The proposal suggests Russia's threat perceptions are still focused westward notwithstanding the NRC's professed goal of fostering cooperation. While the MFA and Medvedev have highlighted the broader EST proposal, they have made no public statements on the parallel NRC proposal.

Mixed Response

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¶7. (C) The response from Allied diplomats in Moscow to Medvedev's proposal has been mixed. While French, German, British, and Italian colleagues said the document was thin, they called for a measured response so as not to injure Medvedev's pride and to maintain the hard-won change in tone in bilateral relations. Many Eastern European diplomats, including those from the Czech Republic, Romania, and Poland, remain suspicious of Russian motives and see the treaty as an attempt to undermine NATO. They argue that European states should ignore or publicly reject the document. Russian commentaries have also given the proposal mixed reviews. Russian foreign policy experts, including the Carnegie Center's Dmitry Trenin and Russia in Global Affairs Editor-in-Chief Fedor Lukyanov, while sympathizing with the principles behind the document, acknowledge weaknesses in the text and see it as a starting point for discussions.

The Ball is now in Our Court

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¶8. (C) Medvedev's identification of the EST as his top foreign policy objective clearly signals Russia's dissatisfaction with existing structures. And Russia's attack on Georgia last summer demonstrates the risks to the existing regional security architecture. The successful expansion of Europe's zone of stability and prosperity during the last 20 years, achieved using the tools of NATO and EU enlargement, has now reached a plateau. Continuing to follow the policies used during the past two decades will result in deadlock with Russia and insecurity in European regions that seek, but have not yet attained, close integration with European institutions. A new paradigm that gives Russia a better sense of buy-in of European structures would create a smoother pathway for achieving the goal of European integration by former Soviet states and eventually Russia itself.

¶9. (C) Rejecting the European security proposal out of hand all but guarantees returning to the well-worn ruts at OSCE and could reduce Russian willingness to work with us on common security threats (Iran, Afghanistan, counter-proliferation, and North Korea to name a few). European security could be proposed as a major agenda item for the OSCE's Annual Security Review Conference in mid-2010 to motivate meaningful interactions in the coming six months.

¶10. (C) On the tactical level, intensifying our dialogue with Russia on European security could create opportunities to overcome obstacles to reactivating the CFE Treaty and resolving the A/CFE impasse. The draft treaty also opens the door to discussions of new and stronger confidence and security-building mechanisms that would avoid future recriminations on the nature or purpose of NATO membership, exercises or military facilities.

¶11. (C) An effort to elicit discussion on the EST by the U.S. and Allies would help smoke out whether Russia's agenda is sincere or focused on weakening a perceived adversary. For example:

--Russia's demand for legally binding resolution mechanisms could be explored for existing OSCE tools.

--If Russia wants beefed-up transparency/confidence-building in NATO-Russia interactions, then we should explore a package that includes Moscow ending its suspension of CFE and

MOSCOW 00003056 003 OF 003

following through on its Istanbul commitments on A/CFE.

--In exchange for a definition of "substantial combat forces," we could seek an expressed, written commitment that neither NATO nor Russia poses a threat to one another, requiring a tangible Russian demonstration that its doctrine, training, exercises, and threat assessments no longer target NATO and its allies. Such a demonstration could require greater transparency measures and notification of Russian deployments in "flank areas," thereby reinforcing A/CFE commitments.

--Russia's essentially symbolic demands for the West to engage with the SCO and CSTO could be linked to higher priorities, such as assurances that all countries enjoy freedom of association and that our respective alliances remain open to new members.

The Domestic Angle

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¶12. (C) American reactions will be closely monitored because of the implications for Russian domestic politics. Engaging seriously with Russia would reduce the amount of ammunition available to Russian conservatives intent on demonstrating that the West wants to undermine and weaken Russia and refuses to treat it as an equal. While the struggle between

Russia's "siloviki" (officials from the military and security services) and modernizers for the country's future will ultimately be decided by Russians themselves, Medvedev's proposal provides us the opportunity to influence one of the core points of this debate: the intentions of the West.

¶13. (C) Finally, an effective response to Medvedev's proposal should acknowledge Russia's apprehensions about the status quo and European security and accept the possibility of building incrementally on existing structures without compromising the centrality of NATO and OSCE. This process could advance the long-term goal of moving Russia from "zero-sum" thinking to embrace more sincerely effective partnership to confront common challenges.

Beyrle